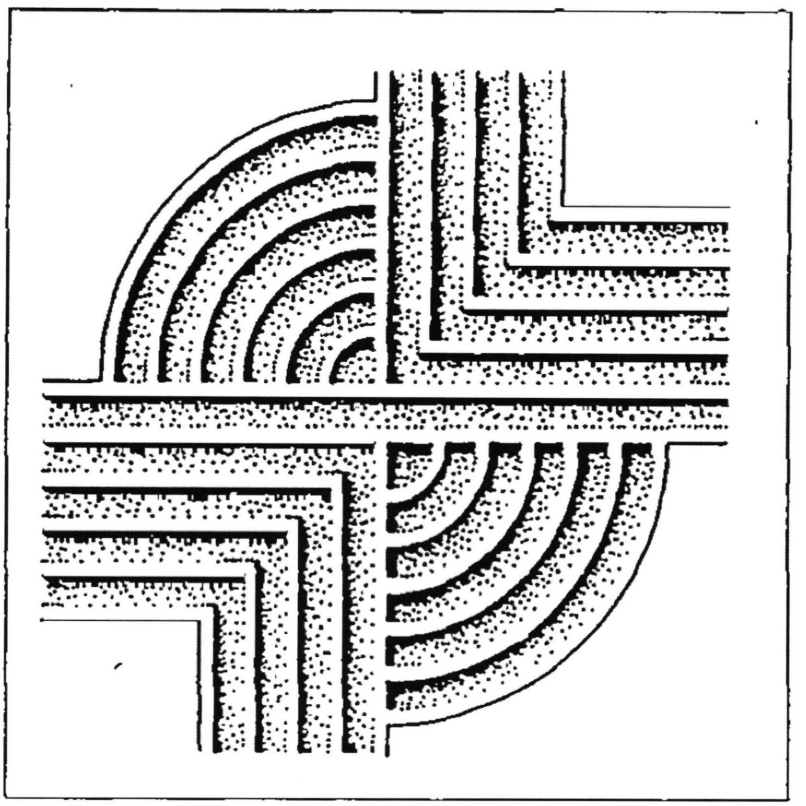
MANAGEMENT SUMMARY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL DATA RECOVERY EXCAVATIONS AT 38BU1713, CRESCENT PLANTATION, BEAUFORT COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA



CHICORA RESEARCH CONTRIBUTION 259

MANAGEMENT SUMMARY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL DATA RECOVERY EXCAVATIONS AT 38BU1713, CRESCENT PLANTATION, BEAUFORT COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA

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CHICORA RESEARCH CONTRIBUTION 259

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ABSTRACT

This report provides preliminary data on excavations at 38BU1713, a Stallings phase site identified on Crescent Plantation in Beaufort County, just off Hilton Head Island. The investigations were conducted by Chicora Foundation during late September and early October, 1998 for Centex Homes of Hilton Head Island. This work was proposed, and approved, under a Memorandum of Agreement with the Charleston District Corps of Engineers and reviewed by the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. Subsequently, however, the Corps determined they had no authority so the investigations were conducted under the review of the Office of Ocean and Coastal Resources Management (OCRM).

This site was initially recorded and assessed by Chicora's survey of the project area in 1997. The excavation of shovel tests and a series of three 2-foot units revealed large sherds below the plowzone, associated with lithics and animal bones. The site was thought to be able to address a broad range of significant research questions concerning the Late Archaic settlement on the sea islands and nearby mainland.

Excavations at 38BU1713 focused on the close-interval excavation of auger tests in order to develop density maps of the site, followed by the hand excavation of four block areas. A total of 1700 square feet were excavated over the five-week field project, with two areas (comprising 500 square feet) removed in areas of dense shell, and two areas (comprising 1200 square feet) in areas producing relatively little shell.

Although only two features were identified as a result of these excavations, we found that the Stallings assemblage, while present in the plowzone, was concentrated in a level about 1 to 2 feet below the current surface. Associated with the Stallings pottery were relatively numerous lithic materials, including a number of small chert flakes, likely representing resharpening of already formed flaked tools. The bulk of these chipped stone tools were variations of present were such tools as "nutting stones," and hammerstones. Curiously not present were any soapstone disks or fragments.

Food remains present at the site included a small assemblage of faunal remains, including both mammals and fish. Ethnobotanical remains were scattered through the Stallings levels and most noticeable was the quantity of charred hickory nutshells. Shellfish were apparently not a major dietary feature of the Stallings occupation.

Associated with the Stallings materials in the plowzone were small assemblages of later wares — primarily Deptford Cord Marked. This Deptford assemblage appears to have been associated with the shell found on the site and, at least in that sense, appears typical of other Deptford sites in the Beaufort area.

Although features were not as abundant as had been hoped for, the site offers a range of important research information, including the lithic and pottery assemblages, the presence of both faunal and botanical remains, the absence of soapstone and baked clay balls, and well defined occupation areas clearly associated with dense concentrations of artifacts. In addition, the investigations found a relatively common artifact type — abraders — being made out of naturally occurring iron oxide nodules. In addition, the excavations revealed that the Stallings pottery lacks carbonization on either the interior or exterior of the sherds.

At the time of this management summary, two radiometric dates have been submitted for the Stallings component, using carbonized hickory nutshell. The collection has been cataloged, and analysis of the faunal remains is beginning. Additional studies yet to be undertaken, but planned, include phytolith and pollen studies of both features and zone soils, as well detailed analysis of the Stallings sherds, including petrographic examination of the paste and, especially, the associated fiber.

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INTRODUCTION

Project Background

Site 38BU1713 was initially reported in 1997 by Chicora's reconnaissance level study at Crescent, with additional investigations during the intensive survey (Trinkley 1997b). The site was found on a sandy ridge overlooking the marshes of a small tributary of Sawmill Creek to the east. The development is situated about 5 miles northwest of Hilton Head Island and 15 miles southwest of Beaufort (Figure 1).

Shell and artifacts associated with the site were uniformly scattered for a distance of nearly 800 feet north-south along the western edge of a small drainage and extended west from the slough edge for a maximum of about 300 feet. Much of the site was in fallow field, although toward the southern edge of the site the site is covered in sparse pines. A dirt road is found around the eastern edge of the site, leading to a trailer and then westward toward Malcomb Johnson Road.

Surface visibility in most areas was reduced to less than 25% because of a thick growth of weeds. Nevertheless, a small surface collection was made, which included Stallings, Deptford, and Irene sherds, as well as a chert flake. The routine shovel tests at 100-foot intervals produced very discouraging results (only one of the 16 shovel tests in the site area yielded artifacts) although the pedestrian survey identified an area of very dense surface shell following a sandy ridge running roughly north-south through the area, parallel, but back from, the slough. Also found was what appeared to be a remnant shell mound, composed of oyster shell, periwinkle, and whelk. Combined, these features suggested that a more intensive survey of the site core might be productive.

The northern third of the site was examined by the excavation of an additional 77 shovel tests at 25-foot intervals. In this area 23 (30%) produced artifacts, while an additional 11 (14%) produced only shell. These materials included Stallings, Deptford, St. Catherines, and Savannah materials — representing a rather broad chronological range spanning the period from about 2000 B.C. to at least A.D. 1200.

The testing not only pointed out the diversity of materials and range in density, but also suggested that shell and artifacts might be mutually exclusive. That is, where shell is dense, perhaps representing remnant (now plowed) middens, there were relatively few artifacts. And, where artifact density was high, perhaps representing domestic areas, shell middens were absent.

Three 2-foot units were excavated, primarily on the southern edge of the testing, in what we felt was the core of the site. Units 1 and 2 revealed a mixed plowzone with dense shell, overlying a yellowish-brown sandy subsoil. Test Unit 3, however, was excavated in an area of remnant midden. It revealed shell to a depth of about a foot, overlying the same sandy subsoil. In all three units only Stallings pottery was recovered. Coupled with the pottery was a fragment of worked antler from one unit and each produced a moderate quantity of animal bone — indicating that the shell density is sufficient to preserve faunal remains, in spite of plowing.

The south edge of the site was also explored, although in somewhat less detail. In this area we found considerably fewer positive shovel tests and it appears that site density is much lower. There is little shell and no evidence of intact middens.

Based on this information we recommended 38BU1713 eligible, with the focus clearly being on the northern third of the site — specifically on the intact Stallings midden and non-midden areas clustered in the vicinity of the test units and the intact shell.

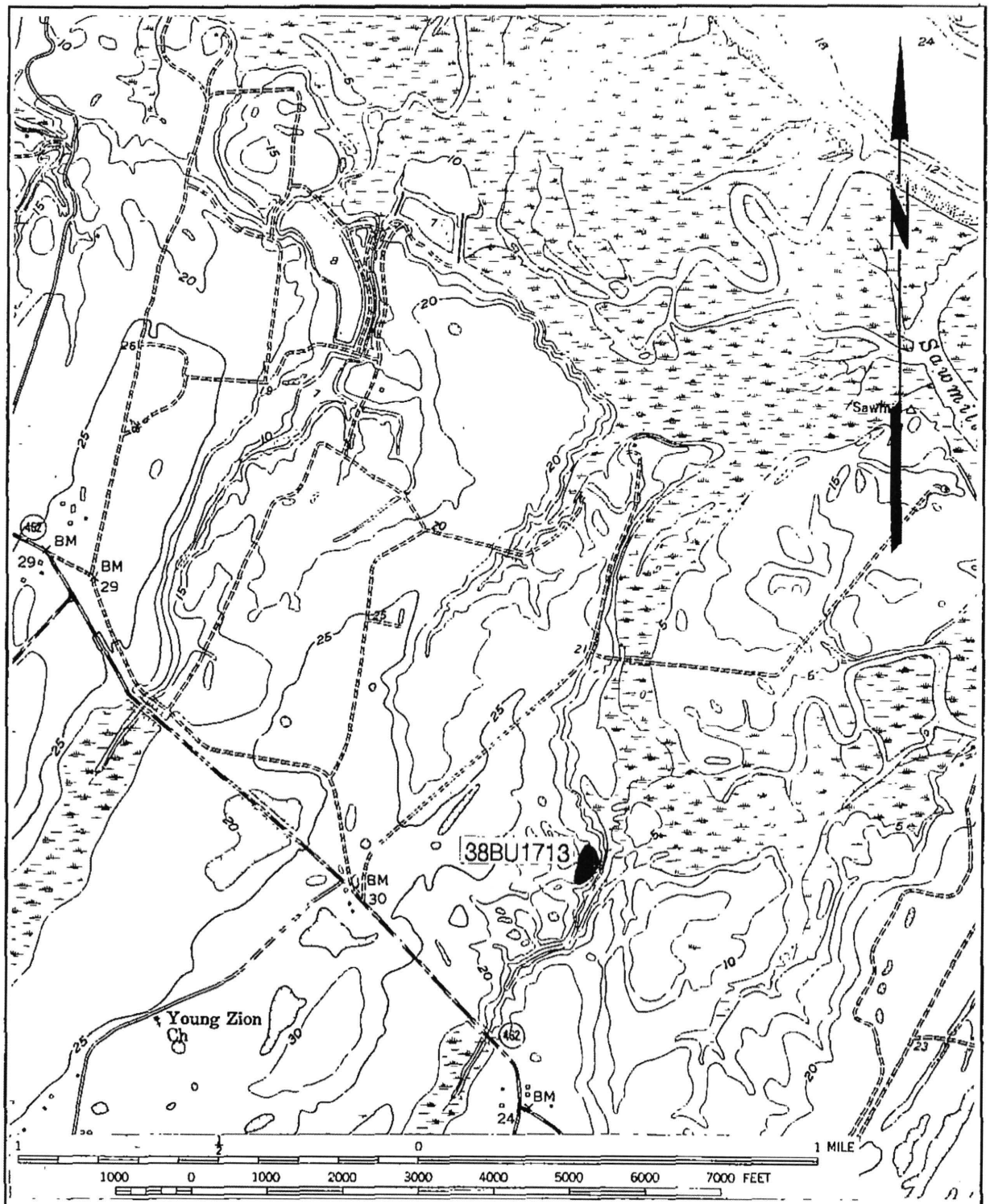

Figure 1. A portion of the USGS Spring Island 7.5' topographic map showing the project area and 38BU1713.

Since Centex was obtaining Army Corps permits associated with the project development, we prepared a Memorandum of Agreement at the behest of the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and submitted it to the various parties (the SHPO, Army Corps, and Centex) for approval. Both Centex and the SHPO immediately approved the MOA, as well as the accompanying data recovery plan. The MOA was submitted to the Army Corps on March 17, 1998. It was not until Senator Fritz Hollings interceded nearly four months later, in mid-July, that the Corps finally approved the MOA and forwarded it to the Advisory Council for Historic Preservation (ACHP), where it was approved on July 16, 1998. A week later, the Corps rescinded their involvement in the MOA, claiming no jurisdiction — a claim that is contrary to the National Historic Preservation Act and also difficult to understand considering the extraordinary time available to their office for review and evaluation prior to forwarding to the ACHP.

Regardless, this leaves the project with no formal MOA or review framework. We believe, therefore, that the appropriate review agency is the Office of Ocean and Coastal Resources Management, which is also preparing permits for Centex Homes, as well as Beaufort County.

Research Orientation

The survey level research explored at least some of the questions appropriate for this site, noting that the range of potential questions is substantial, primarily because so few have been professionally examined. Comparative sites include, for example, work at the Mimms Point Site in the Sumter National Forest by Sassaman (1993b), the examination of a Stallings and Thom's Creek midden on Spring Island by Espenshade et al. (1994), and the work at the Fish Haul Site on Hilton Head Island by Trinkley (1986). Research may be broadly divided into three categories: chronology-typology, subsistence, and settlement organization.

Chronology

Much of our knowledge concerning Stallings sites comes from large sites, often shell rings, that actually represent amalgams of repeated occupations. 38BU1713 is a small site that appears to represent fairly limited occupation. We anticipate that this will result in greater typological and chronological resolution, allowing the refinement of current concepts and ideas. Fundamental to this is the collection of pottery in discrete features with associated charred material for radiometric dating. Although such features are not proven to exist at 38BU1713, the dense, apparently intact midden suggests that they will be found. It is also perhaps appropriate to note that of the 60 dates for Stallings, only 14 are from South Carolina. Consequently, while tightly controlled proveniences are ideal, even midden dates associated with specific assemblages will be helpful in refining the evolution of Stallings phases along the Carolina coast.

Typology

An important research question continues to be how the typology from the Savannah River drainage compares to that found on the coast. Sassaman (1993a, 1993b) has developed a detailed reconstruction of temporal periods based on attributes such as surface finish and rim style. While these appear to be well defined for the interior Savannah drainage, little effort has been devoted to determining whether his constructs are equally appropriate for the coast.

In a similar manner, some discussion has been offered concerning the relationship of Stallings and Thom's Creek, although the transition from one to the other is far from clear. In a similar manner, although previous work has strongly associated Stallings and Spanish moss fiber (Simpkins and Scoville 1981), after the initial research little effort has been spent to explore what other organics might be present in Stallings pottery. Recent work on Thom's Creek wares at 38CH1456 (Trinkley and Hacker 1997) suggests that typological issues must be tackled using a broad spectrum of petrographic analyses. Such work has never been undertaken in any methodic way at a Stallings site. The presence of seemingly large quantities of Stallings wares suggests that this approach is practical at 38BU1713.

This research may be able to begin distinguishing between the different wares or alternatively may find that the clays and associated aplastics are nearly identical. Thin sections have

traditionally been used to explore a broad range of significant paste attributes which can distinguish different wares, including minerals used (perhaps reflecting individual or distinct clay sources), abundance and associations, particle orientations, void size, shapes and locations, surface treatments (compaction, for example), and alterations from firing or post-deposition factors. Chicora Foundation has been fortunate to work with Dr. Michael Smith, a geologist at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington who has been conducting ceramic research for the past decade. Dr. Smith has already explored Thom's Creek pottery, providing a comparative base for the current Stallings research.

Subsistence

Of equal interest are efforts to explore the subsistence base of the Stallings people living at the site. Explaining the research at Mimms Point in Edgefield County on the Savannah River, Sassaman notes that, "little is known about the subsistence patterns of Late Archaic populations in the Middle Savannah River Valley" (Sassaman 1993b:9). Little more is known about the Stallings subsistence pattern along the coast, especially since much of the work has either not been written up (such as at Spanish Mount on Edisto Island) or has not produced large faunal collections (for example, although Espenshade et al. [1994] examined a Stallings midden on Spring Island, no faunal material was collected). Consequently, research at 38BU1713 has the potential to explore subsistence research using unbiased samples collected through both flotation and water screening.

The collection of midden data, including careful sampling of both vertebrate and non-vertebrate fauna, allows for a more complete reconstruction of dietary patterns. In particular, research at 38CH1219 has demonstrated the usefulness of large samples (representing 40 to 50% of individual middens). Research at 38CH1456 has suggested that fine (⅛-inch mesh) screening and careful tabulation of shell remains are absolutely essential for accurate subsistence statements (Trinkley and Hacker 1997). As a result, our focus will be on the recovery of large, well documented samples from only a few middens or features, rather than small (and less well documented) samples from a number of different middens.

Settlement

Moving to the issue of settlement research, much attention has been focused on the probability of non-shell middens along the Savannah River being precursors to the large shell middens. While inappropriate for coastal contexts, it does seem essential to recognize that there are likely differences between the large middens such as the shell rings and the small sites such as 38BU1713. Moreover, it seems likely that opening of aerially broad expanses may reveal distinctions between domestic areas and trash areas which have been suggested by the shovel testing data.

EXCAVATIONS

Methodology

Field Methods

Although the initial survey had incorporated close interval (25-foot) shovel testing, it was thought that even closer interval testing would yield additional information on the density and distribution of the site's components. As a result, we proposed to conduct an auger survey covering an area measuring approximately 200 feet square, centered on the observed above grade shell midden. While the site was known to extend beyond these parameters, the previous testing suggested that artifact density declines, plowing intensity increases, and at least some of the site boundaries may be attributed to smearing or blurring. We believed that the 200-foot block was not only the site core based on the distribution of shell, but that it also was a manageable work area. Concentrating our efforts in one site area (reflecting just under one acre) was thought far more productive than attempting to sample the entire site (which incorporates nearly 5.5 acres).

Auger testing at the Fish Haul site on Hilton Head Island (Trinkley et al. 1986:1181-119) had used 50-foot intervals to great success, although the site area being covered there was 15 acres. We decided to conduct the additional testing using 20-foot units, largely as a matter of economics. This would provide data far superior to Fish Haul, better than the shovel testing, but still within the scheme of the current project.

After the unexpected delay in returning to the field, we discovered that the site had become more heavily overgrown and that the originally observed above-grade midden was no longer identifiable. As a result, we could not orient the grid to this midden, but we were able to re-identify two of the three previous 2-foot test units and these were used to help direct the placement of the 200-foot block.

This resulted in the initial excavation of 121 auger tests. A two-person power auger with a 10-inch bit was used. We selected auger testing over shovel testing since augering tends to be both faster in open fields and to do less damage to artifacts. All tests were screened using ¼-inch mesh. While all artifacts were collected, shell was weighed in the field, noted, and discarded. The resulting artifact and shell weight data was used to produce density maps which were then used to help guide additional research at the site.

After the completion of the initially laid out 200-foot block, we decided to expand the study area an additional 100 feet to the west, forming a 300 by 200 foot block. In all, 176 auger tests were examined, covering an area of about 1.4 acres (Figure 2).

In order to establish horizontal control for the auger survey (as well as the following block excavations), a modified Chicago grid was established over the site area. The initial southwest corner was designed 100R100. With this system the first number indicates feet north of a datum (0R0), while the second number indicates feet right (or east) of the data. Therefore, 100R200 would be located 100 feet north and 200 feet east (or right) of the datum. Individual squares are designed by their southeast corner.

As precise as this grid system is, it is floating in space. In order to tie it down and allow it to be reconstructed in the future, should that be necessary, it was integrated with the development survey, using several control points for the proposed golf course.

Vertical control at the site was maintained through the use of a pre-existing elevation datum established at the south edge of the site. Elevations are expressed as feet above mean sea level (AMSL). This allows widely separated areas of the site to be precisely compared and the vertical controls can be easily re-established should that be necessary.

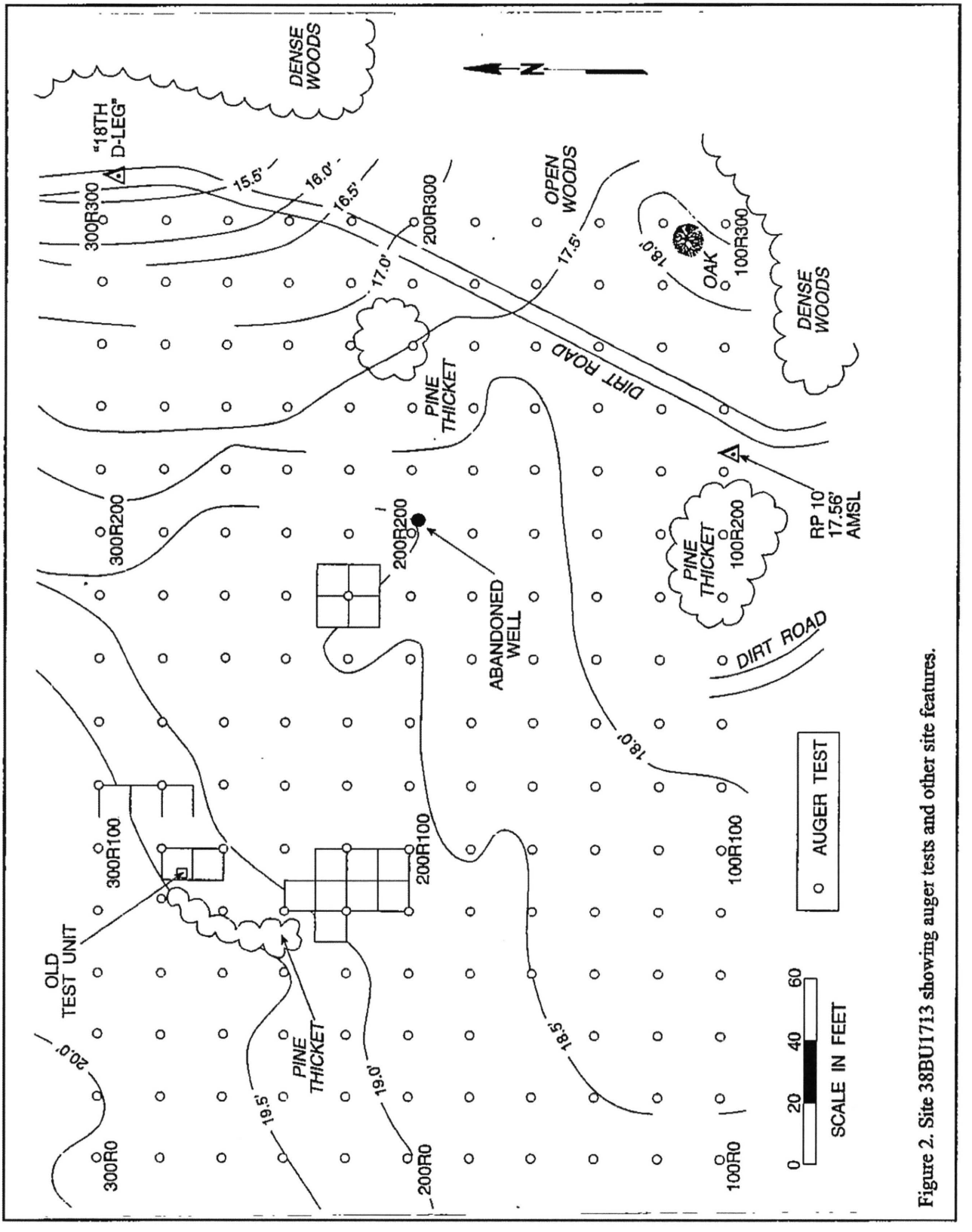

Figure 2. Site 38BU1713 showing auger tests and other site features.

Excavation proceeded by hand with all soil mechanically screened through ¼-inch mesh. Screen loads were sorted in the field, with all materials from a single provenience bagged together. Shell was quantified by weight in the field and discarded. Munsell soil color notations were made during the course of excavations, typically on moist freshly exposed soils.

A one-quart soil samples were retained from each provenience. Some colleagues retain much smaller samples (often no larger than an ounce), in order to minimize the size of the collection for curation. Such small samples severely restrict the types of future analyses possible. Since we knew that some of the samples would be used in the pollen and phytolith studies, as well as for geological analysis, larger samples were clearly necessary. Shell samples were occasionally retained to document specified materials, but were not collected in any routine fashion.

Each unit which appeared to contain shell midden (or remnant midden), also had a shell column measuring 2.2 feet square established in its southeast corner. The matrix from this column was first weighed and then screened through ¼-inch mesh. The resulting shell was then weighed, in order to calculate the density of the midden. This is a standard approach that Chicora has used at a variety of middens. By continuing the practice we hope to accumulate a substantial data set that may help determine the normal variation by cultural association.

Afterwards the shell from the column was separated by species and quantified by weight. This allows us to evaluate the contributions of different species and to integrate the shellfish data into the zooarchaeological study as biomass.

Units were troweled and photographed using black and white negative and color transparency film, typically at the base of the plowzone and the base of the excavations. Each unit was drawn at a scale of 1 inch to 2 feet. Features were designed by consecutive numbers. Post holes were consecutively numbered by specific unit.

Feature fill was screened through ¼-inch mesh and features, upon completion of their excavation, were also photographed using black and white negative film and color transparencies. One quart soil samples were obtained from all features. In addition, approximately 5 to 10 gallons of soil from each feature was retained for off-site water flotation.

Our proposal indicated that near the completion of the hand excavations we would determine whether mechanical stripping of the site area would be undertaken. We envisioned this being used to help expose additional occupational areas or feature concentrations. The excavations, however, did not detect sufficient features to make this approach necessary.

At the conclusion of the work the excavations were covered in plastic and Centex Homes was notified that backfilling could be conducted at their convenience.

Laboratory Processing and Analysis

Processing was begun in the field, but was completed at Chicora's labs in Columbia. During both field and lab processing individuals were cautioned not to aggressively wash the Stallings sherds. Since we want to explore the presence of interior/exterior carbonization, it is important that these materials not be removed by cleaning.

During this washing artifacts were sorted by broad categories — pottery, lithics, bone, and other materials. Upon drying the artifacts were temporarily bagged by these categories, pending cataloging.

Cataloging has also been completed for the collection, using the system employed by the S.C. Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology, where we anticipate that the collection and the associated field records will be curated. This institution has been selected since all of the earlier survey materials are housed there. All original field records will be provided on pH neutral, alkaline buffered paper. Black and white photographic materials have been processed to archival permanence. Color slides, while not considered archivally stable, consist of Fujichrome material, which has the highest degree of permanence next to Kodachrome (which is increasingly difficult to have appropriately processed).

Zooarchaeological materials have been sorted

out for analysis. Two ethnobotanical samples have been selected and submitted to Beta Analytic for radiometric dating. Stallings and non-Stallings pottery have been separated in the cataloging process. We anticipate that more detailed analyses will begin in about six weeks.

Results of the Excavations

Auger Testing

When only the Stallings pottery is considered (since it is this assemblage for which the site was found eligible), eight concentrations were observed in the study area (Figure 3). One of these areas, at 160R80, consists of a single sherd at one point, while other others, at 160R260 and 220R180, consist of multiple sherds at one auger test. The remainder of the concentrations include multiple sherds spanning several auger tests.

What is perhaps most interesting regarding these concentrations is that they are about 60 to 100 feet from each other, fairly evenly spaced out across the study area. The absence of any clustering may suggest that the site was not extensively used — and that this limited use prevented occupation areas from merging together and blurring the archaeological record.

Clear boundaries are observed on all sides except to the north, where one concentration appears to extend beyond the study area. This suggests that something in the immediate site area, perhaps the nearby Sawmill Creek marshes, access to other resources, or even the sandy ridge, made this particular spot of particular interest to the Stallings people.

When the shell weights are examined, we found a very different picture. There are five concentrations of shell in the study tract. One is very large, extending from the north boundary southward, two are moderately large, and two are relatively small (Figure 4). In each case the dominant (although not exclusive) shellfish was oyster.

When the shell concentrations are compared to the locations of Stallings pottery, the correlation is relatively weak. Three of the eight concentration occur in areas where there is no shell, while another is found on the edge of relatively dense shell. The remaining four Stallings concentrations are found in areas of dense shell.

With this in mind, it initially appeared that the Stallings occupations were found in both shell, and non-shell, areas. Consequently, we determined that it would be appropriate to explore both the midden and non-midden areas.

The auger testing also revealed that Stallings pottery was found, at least occasionally, to depths of about 2.0 feet. Shell, on the other hand, was confined to what might conveniently be called the plowzone.

Block Excavations

A series of four blocks were excavated at 38BU1713 — two in shell areas and two where there was no concentration of shellfish remains. Three of the excavations were in areas of relatively dense Stallings remains, while the fourth was placed between two dense pottery zones.

All of the excavations revealed very similar stratigraphy: a plowzone, usually about 0.8 to 1.0 foot in depth, overlaying yellow sand. The plowzone was usually a very dark grayish brown (10YR3/2) sandy loam. Where shell was present it was typically heavily fragmented by plowing, although remnant midden was encountered in one block. Below the plowzone was a yellowish brown (10YR5/6) sand which gradually graded into a very pale brown 10YR7/3) sand.

Excavations began with the removal of the plowzone as one level. Below, the yellow sand was removed as three levels, each about 0.5 foot in depth and designated levels 2 - 4.

260-270R100

The first block to be examined were the two 10-foot units 260-270R100 in an area generally lacking shell and also situated between two concentrations of Stallings pottery. Our goal in this excavation was to examine the density of materials associated with an area not identified as a Stallings producer by the auger survey and to also examine an area where there appeared to be little shell.

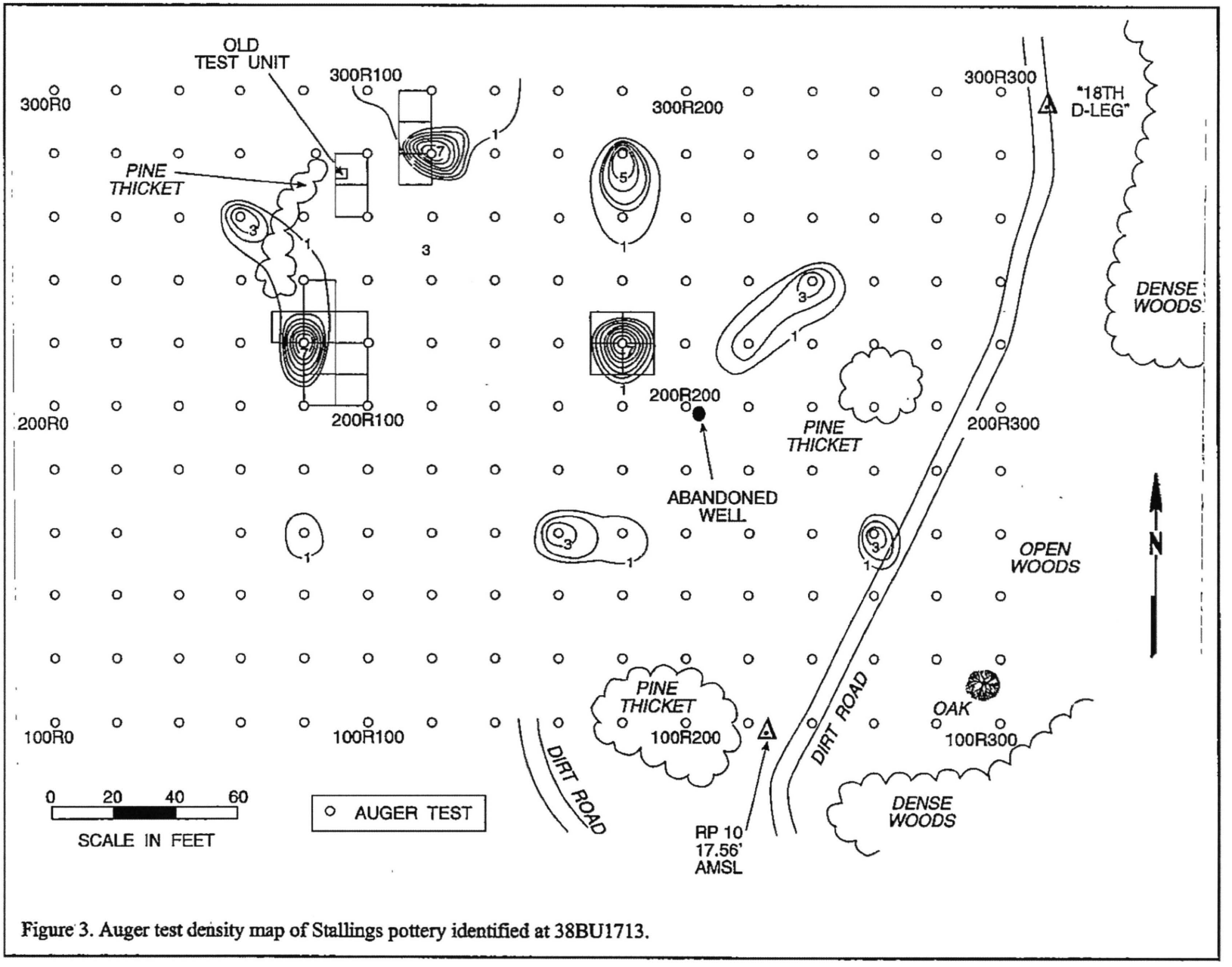

Figure 3. Auger test density map of Stallings pottery identified at 38BU1713.

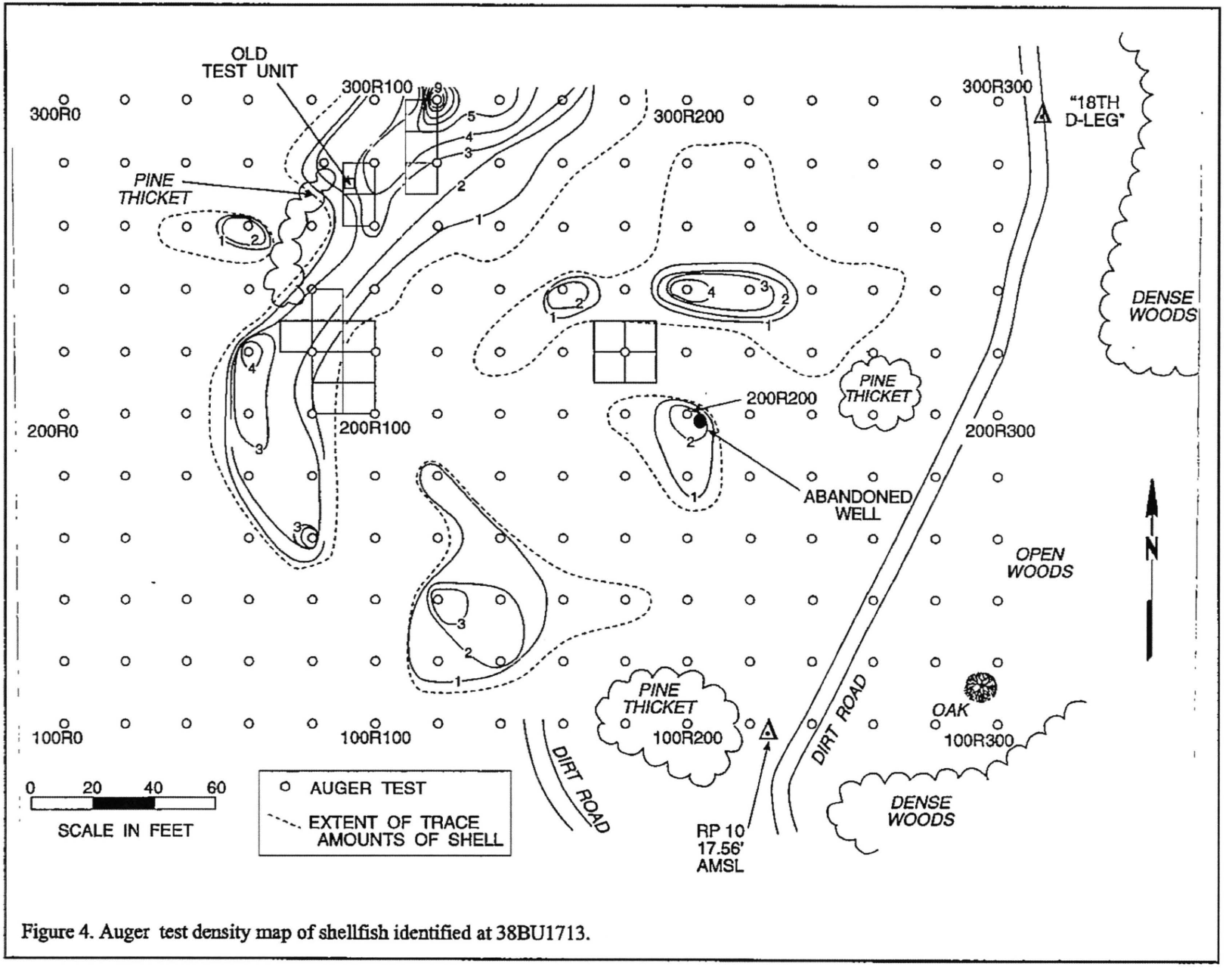

Figure 4. Auger test density map of shellfish identified at 38BU1713.

Excavation revealed that Test Unit 1 from the original survey was located in the west central portion of 270R100. Shell in the units was surprising dense (totaling 1,009 pounds, or about 6.6 pounds per cubic foot), but was not recognizable as a midden (in other words, it was totally plow disturbed). In both units oyster was the dominant shellfish, followed by periwinkles and clam.

Both units were excavated to the base of level 4, about 2.0 to 2.5 feet below the surface level. The plowzone and level 2 produced the greatest number of artifacts, with the Stallings material being concentrated in level 2. The plowzone in both units produced a number of non-Stallings sherds, primarily Deptford wares. By level 4 artifacts were very sparse and probably represent materials shifting downward in the loose sands through bioturbation.

Unit 260R100 contained only tree stains, while 270R100 contained one clear post hole at the base of the plowzone. This post hole, measuring about 1.5 feet in diameter, was 1.6 feet in depth with a pointed base and a stepped profile (Figure 5).

270-290R120

This 300 square foot block was opened to explore a concentration of Stallings pottery which also appeared to be in an area of dense shellfish (Figure 6). In fact, shell density was found to range from 5.3 pounds per cubic foot in the southern-most unit to 16.1 pounds per cubic foot in 290120 where remnant midden was identified.

The plowzone from these units again produced primarily Deptford pottery, which appears to be associated with the remnant midden. Regardless, there was Stallings material present, including a number of biface fragments (primarily Savannah River Stemmed and Small Savannah River Stemmed variants). The plowzone ranged from about 0.7 to 1.0 foot, again overlying the yellow sand excavated as levels 2-4.

Increasing amounts of Stallings pottery were found in the lower, yellow sand, levels, with the density decreasing to the north. It appears that the Stallings core may be in 270R120 or perhaps a little to the south.

Unit 270R120 produced three post holes, all identified at the base of level 2 (although at least one may have originated at a higher elevation). These ranged in diameters from 0.6 to 0.9 foot and in depth from 0.3 to 0.6 foot. All had rounded to pointed bases and appear to be prehistoric in origin. One (post hole 3) dates from the Middle Woodland occupation, while the others may date from the Stallings period.

Unit 280R120 contained four somewhat amorphous brown stains, including one which evidenced some shell, but there did not appear sufficiently well defined to be excavated as post holes. As excavation of level 2 continued, it became clear that two were associated with a feature (designated Feature 2) in the northwest quadrant of the unit. The feature consisted of dense shell in a black (10YR2/1) sand matrix. Surrounding it were mottled and stained soils ranging in color from very dark gray (10YR3/1) to brown (10YR4/3). It is likely that these stains are associated with the use area surrounding the feature — a nearly round, bowl-shaped pit filled with shell. Feature 2, centered at 287.3R126.3, measured about 2.0 feet in diameter and had a depth of 0.49 foot.

To the north, unit 290R120 evidenced two tree stains and a large shell-filled pit at the base of the plowzone. This shell pit, designated Feature 1, contained dense shell and black (10YR2/1) sand along with Stallings sherds. This feature is likely associated with Feature 1, since they are not only spatially close but are both associated with the same streak of brown mottled soils. A somewhat similar brown sand and shell matrix was found in the northeast corner of the unit, but was not excavated.

Feature 1, at 292.2R128.5, measured 3.8 by 3.1 feet and was 1.4 feet in depth. The excavation of the feature produced a total of 208 pounds of shell (oyster represents 83.3%, periwinkle 10.0%, stout tagelus 4.2%, and ribbed mussel 2.5%). Also present was a small quantity of turtle bone and several Stallings sherds.

It is important to evaluate the temporal placement of these two features — are they Stallings or Middle Woodland? They were found under a midden dominated by Middle Woodland ceramics. The shellfish assemblage, however, is clearly different, with both stout tagelus and ribbed mussel not appearing in the overlying middens. Furthermore, only Stallings

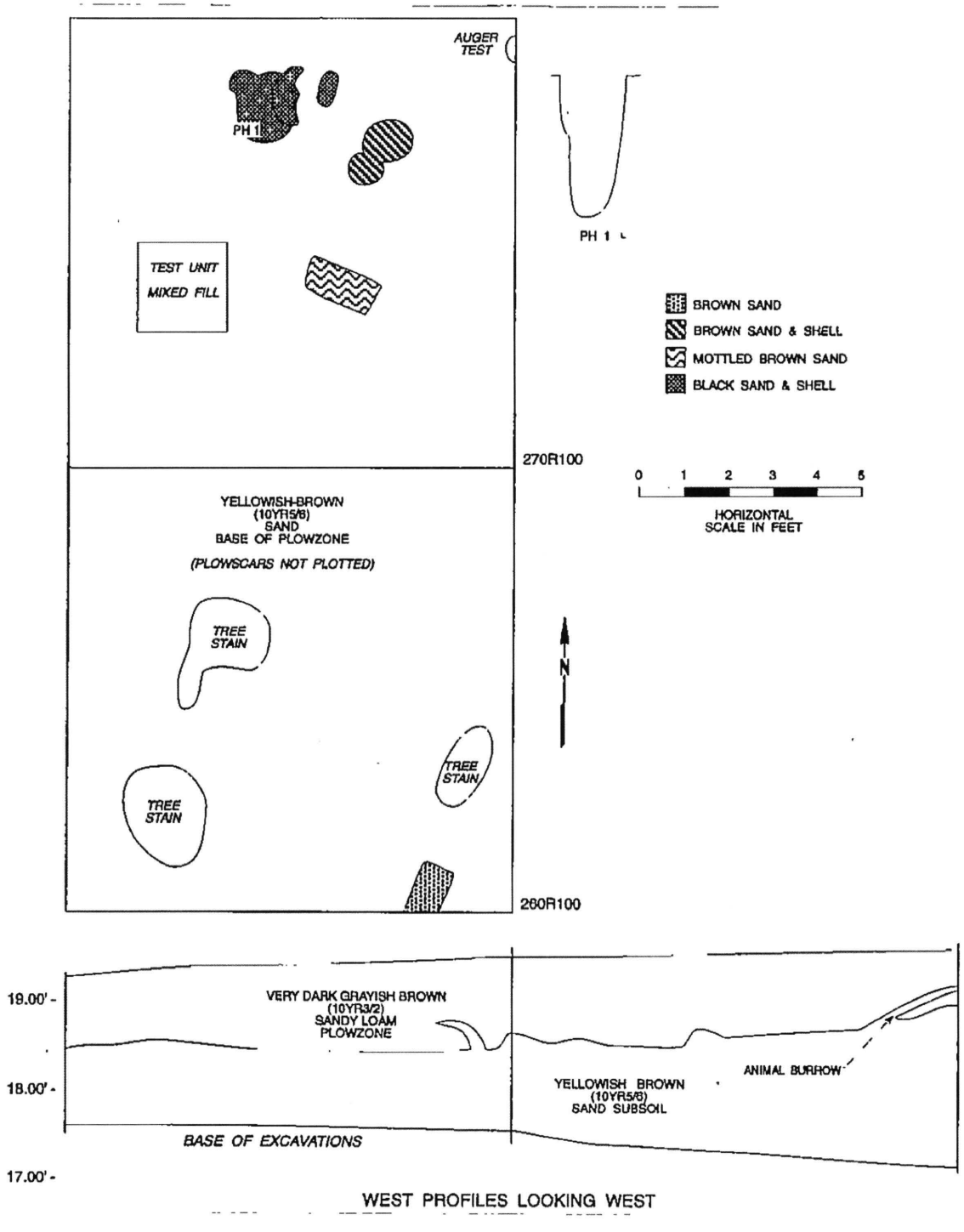

Figure 5. Plan and profiles of 260-270R100.

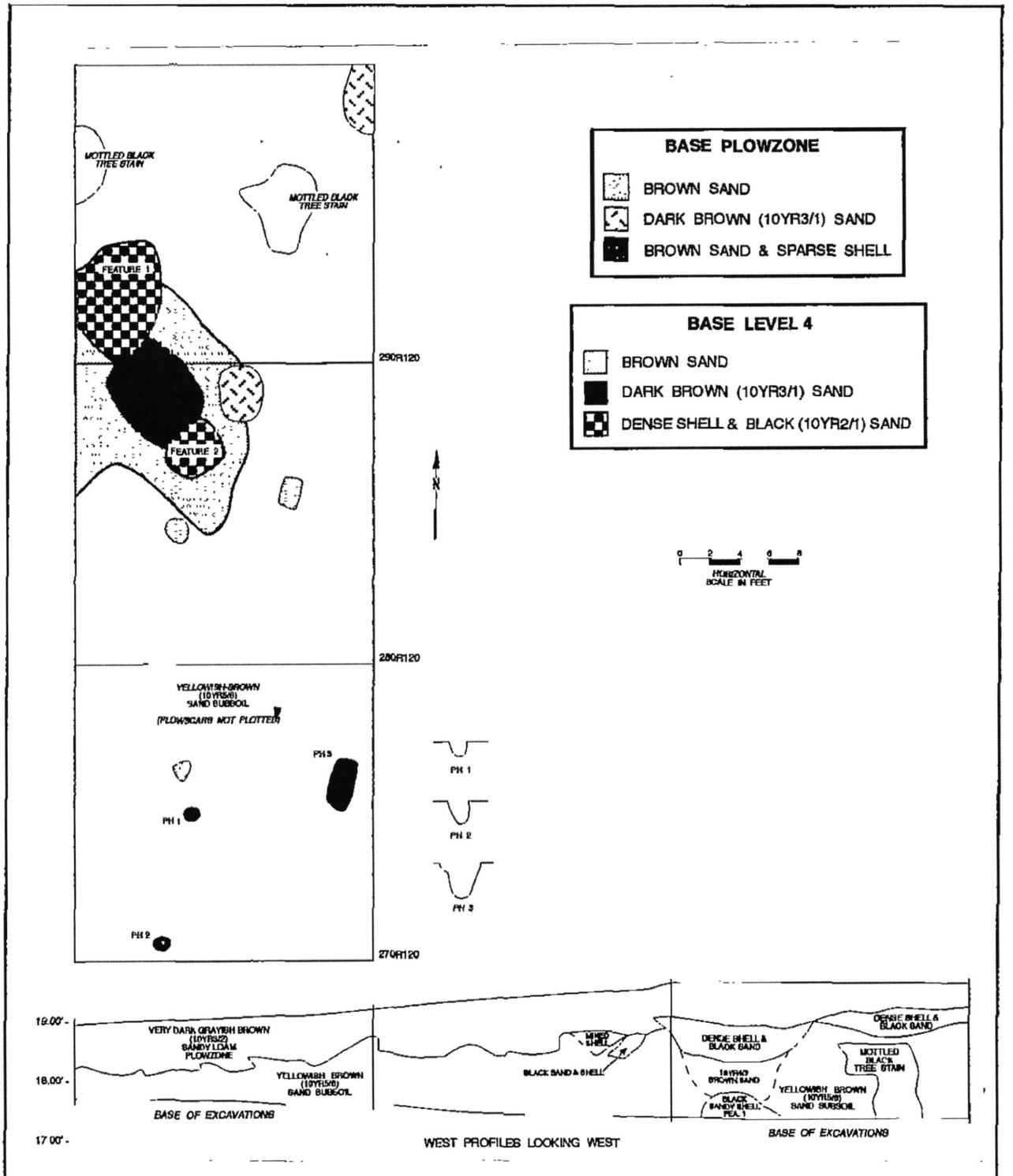

Figure 6. Plan and profiles for 270-290R120.

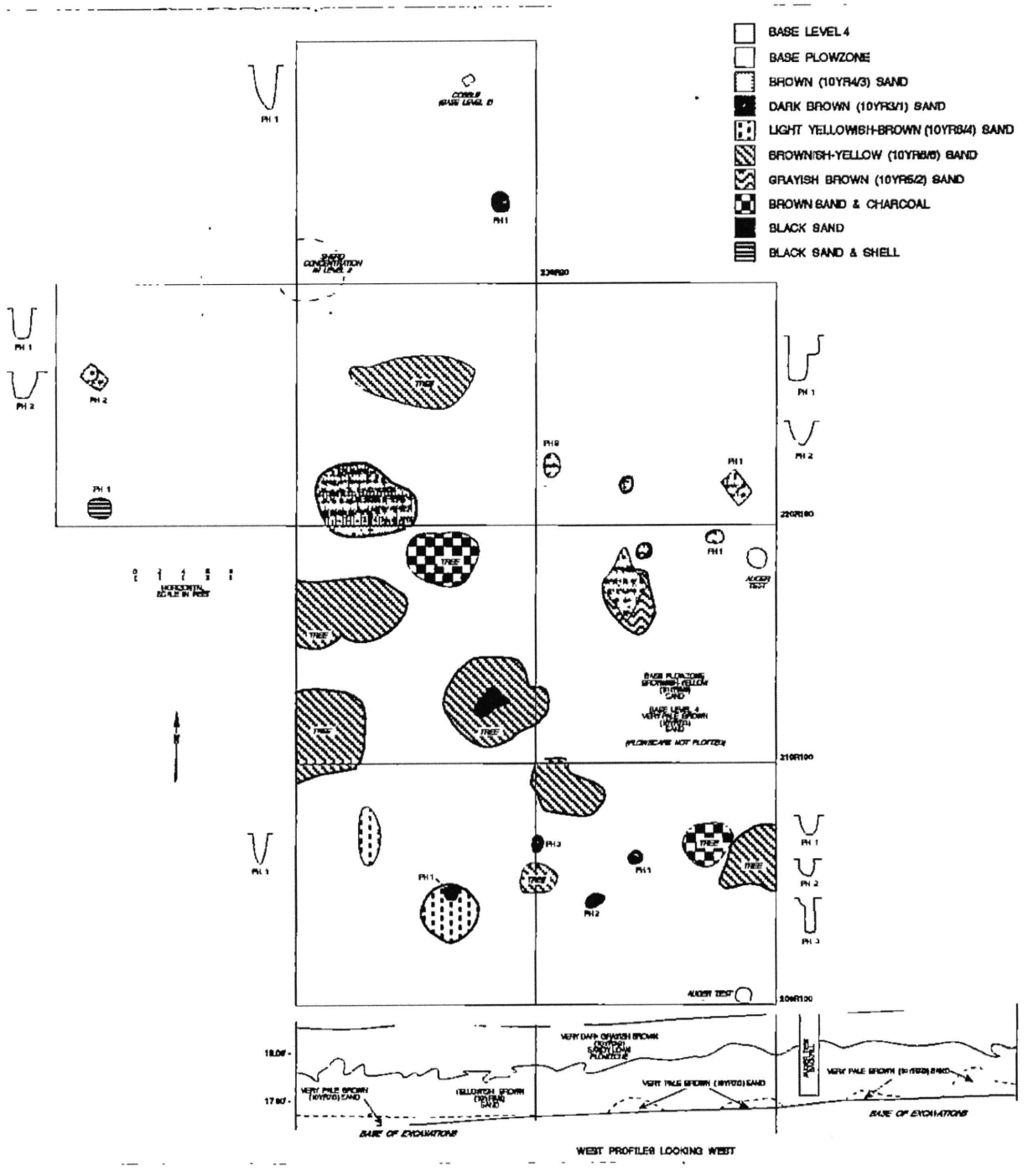

Figure 7. Plan and profiles of 200-220R90-100, 220R80, 230R90.

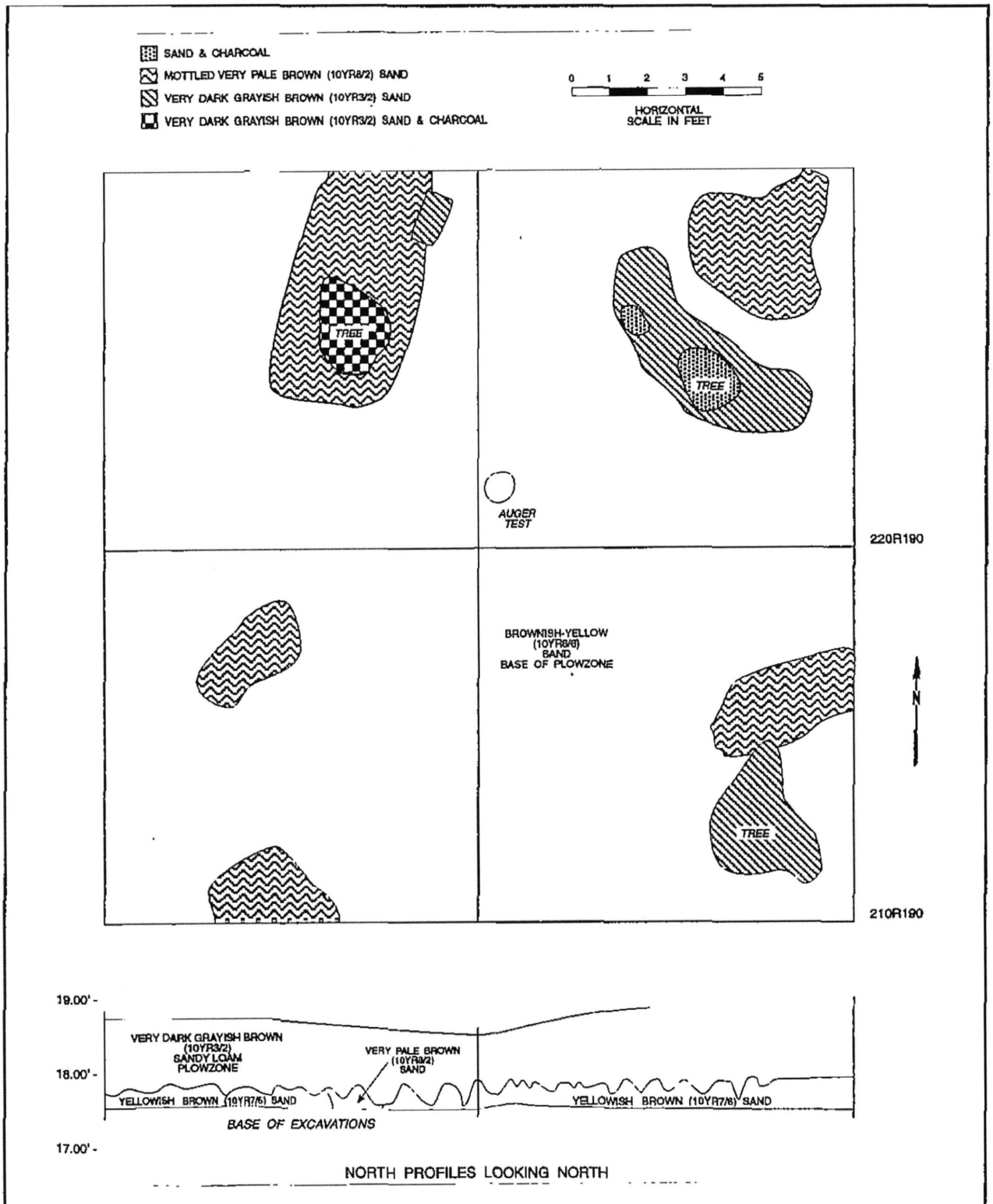

Figure 8. Plan and profiles of 210-220R180-190.

sherds were recovered in the features. The shell, while dense, seemed to contain more soil than many Middle Woodland shell pits. In sum, it appears that these do represent Stallings pits.

200-220R90-100, 220R80, 230R90

This was the largest block, encompassing 800 square feet, and it was placed to examine a dense concentration of Stallings materials found in the auger testing in an area of relatively dense shell, also identified by the auger survey (Figure 7). Excavations in this block were taken to a depth of about 2.0 feet, with the Stallings component being most dense in levels 2 and 3. Unlike other areas of the site, even the plowzone was dominated by Stallings materials, although the sherds were heavily fragmented.

Shell evidenced a considerable range in density, ranging from a low of 0.7 pounds per cubic foot in 200R100 to a high of 3.1 pounds per cubic foot in 230R90. Examining the shell density unit-by-unit clearly confirms the density projections of the auger survey. It also suggests that the major Stallings occupation zones are in non-shell areas.

At the base of the plowzone five amorphous stains identified as trees were found, although no cultural features were identified. Ten post holes were recognized either at the base of the plowzone or during the excavation of level 2. They range from 0.6 to 1.2 feet in diameter and have depths from about 0.4 to 0.9 feet. All but two have rounded to slightly pointed bases. The two exceptions, post hole 1 in 220R100 and post hole 2 in 220R80, have flat bottoms and are square in outline. Both were also clearly recognizable at the base of the plowzone. Since small quantities of whitewares and other historic remains were found in the collections, it is likely that these posts represent some historic structure.

Within level 3 or 4 several addition stains were observed and these were plotted at the base of level 4. Most represent vague, amorphous stains which might be considered features except that no materials were recovered during excavation. Other stains were more clearly trees, such as three found in 210R90.

Although no features were encountered in these excavations, this block was expanded to 800 square feet because of the exceptional density data it provided. The quantity of sherds clearly declined from south to north and west, allowing us (in combination with the auger test data) to characterize the occupation zone or core as perhaps 30 to 40 feet in diameter. Although this core contained a number of recognizable post holes, the absence of features may suggest distinct functional or activity areas.

No only did levels 2 and 3 contain the bulk of the Stallings collection, but they also contained relatively large quantities of charred hickory nutshells, as well as a significant assemblage of very small flakes — representing the debris from resharpening existing tools. The horizontal distribution of these flakes and the charred nutshells appears to correspond to that of the pottery — declining to the north and west.

210-220R180-190

This 400 square foot block was excavated in an area lacking shell, but centered on what appeared to be an isolated location of dense Stallings pottery (Figure 8). Shell densities were found to vary from 0.8 and 1.0 pounds per cubic foot in 210-220R180 to 2.5 and 3.2 pounds per cubic foot in 210-220R190, again suggesting that the auger mapping is very accurate.

The stratigraphy in these units was identical to that found elsewhere on the site, with a very dark grayish brown (10RY3/2) sandy loam plowzone overlying a yellowish brown (10YR7/6) sand subsoil. And similar to other blocks at the site, we found that the Stallings materials was concentrated in level 2, just below the plowzone. Also like the other blocks we were unsuccessful at identifying clear and convincing features. Several trees were identified at the base of the plowzone, but the other stains were amorphous and lacked any concentrations of cultural materials.

SUMMARY

Research Questions

Four broad topics were proposed for research at 38BU1713: chronology, typology, settlement, and subsistence. We believe that although only two features were identified during the excavation of 1,700 square feet, the site has largely provided the data sets anticipated.

Chronology

In terms of chronology, we sought a relatively small site without repeated occupations that blurred together — and this appears to be the case at 38BU1713. Perhaps the best example of what we believe to be a small occupation area is found in the largest block, where distinct limits were identified for the core occupation area. It was from this area that we obtained two ethnobotanical samples which we feel are suitable for radiometric dating. Both samples consist entirely of charred hickory nutshell, thereby reducing the possibility that we have accidental fire materials included. Although the materials were handpicked from the screen, and therefore represent some degree of "averaging," they should still provide some degree of temporal control for the assemblage. As noted previously, with only 14 Stallings dates from South Carolina, the two from Crescent will make a significant contribution. These dates are also obtained from the block with the largest ceramic assemblage, offering a greater potential for offering observations regarding the temporal placement of these particular wares.

Typology

Although we have not yet begun our analysis of the ceramic collection, the assemblage represents about 3 cubic feet — certainly not huge, but large enough to allow considerable research. In particular, we hope that the collections from each block will allow some degree of intrasite comparison. It may, for example, be possible to determine temporal variation between the different areas based on the ceramic assemblages and this, in turn, may help us understand the use of the site.

Most importantly, however, will be the assemblage level investigation that combines all of the proveniences. Already — based solely on the cataloging — one question stands out. Our initial observations suggest that the Stallings wares exhibit some degree of variation in the amount of fiber present in the paste. Alternatively, the assemblage may also include a small quantity of Thom's Creek pottery. If we are unable to discern any differences in the two wares based on our proposed typological study, we will be particularly interested in learning whether the petrographic study can discern any paste differences, beyond the variable quantities of fiber.

We have also collected a small assemblage of Middle Woodland sherds from the plowzone of the site. Although this assemblage is not the focus of our investigation (and the site was not determined eligible based on their presence), they do present us with an opportunity to compare the Stallings paste with that of Deptford sherds from the same site. Will it be possible to determine if the two assemblages were made of similar clay? Although our goal would not be to determine source locations (a very difficult quest), it may be more feasible to determine similarities or differences.

Subsistence

The faunal assemblage from 38BU1713 is sparse. The shell middens found during testing were largely found, during data recovery, to represent Middle Woodland occupations. Nevertheless, we were able to collect a small quantity of materials and their analysis may help us better understand the activities at this particular site.

Perhaps more useful are the ethnobotanical

collections, including both hand picked and floated samples. In particular, the presence of a large quantity of hickory nutshells suggests that 38BU1713 served the same function as the Stallings occupation at Fish Haul. Although we would be hesitant to suggest that two sites form a pattern, given the variability that is seen in the archaeological record, the similarities are exciting and may prove worthy of additional research.

Settlement

Tied-in closely with the subsistence data are questions regarding the nature of the settlement at 38BU1713. Our research has produced not only the zooarchaeological and ethnobotanical data, but we have some information regarding the spatial limits and organization of the Stallings occupations from our work at the largest block. Even the paucity of features offers evidence, albeit negative. The fact that large shellfish steaming pits are either not present or very rare suggests that other activities were important at the site and probably directed its location. The presence of post holes, while not forming recognizable patterns, also suggests that the site was used for long enough periods that shelters were constructed.

It may also be useful to compare and contrast the Stallings and Deptford settlements at 38BU1713. Although both are in the same ecotone and there has probably been relatively little change over time, the two settlements are clearly very different. This difference is likely the key to our understanding of how the two groups differently adapted to their surroundings.

Other Research Topics

The excavations themselves initiated several additional lines of inquiry. For example, the dearth of soapstone at 38BU1713 may suggest either that this site interacted with the interior in different ways or that the activities taking place on the site were quite different from those where soapstone is found. Since clay balls are also absent in the collection we are inclined to believe that the latter is a more a reasonable scenario.

In addition, the site produced a large quantity of iron oxide concretions — typical of the lowcountry sandy soils — except that many had been used as shaft abraders, shaping or smoothing perhaps bone or wood. In contrast, virtually no sherd hones were observed. Are similar tools present at other sites, perhaps being overlooked, or are these tools unique to 38BU1713?

The large quantity of lithics also suggests that 38BU1713 is somewhat unique. Not only were multiple bifaces present in the collection, but hammerstones and "nutting stones" were also identified. The flake assemblage consists almost exclusively of small, thin flakes characteristic of resharpening pre-existing tools. This suggests that whatever activities were taking place, some degree of lithic renovation or refabrication was necessary.

Another artifact category, the sherds themselves, have also revealed an interesting feature: virtually none evidence any interior or exterior carbonization, in spite of very careful cleaning and examination. Does this perhaps reflect the function of the vessels at this particular site?

Summary

This management summary documents that the work proposed for 38BU1713 has been successfully completed. It also provides some information on the status of the investigations, suggesting the lines of research we intend to explore with the collections.

In addition, the management summary also demonstrates, we hope, that there is the potential for relatively significant research even at sites which do not yield features. Although this has long been understood in archaeology, it is sometimes easy to equate features with data, and from there with National Register eligibility. While we would have liked to encounter far more than two features, site 38BU1713 still holds exceptional promise to help address significant research questions.

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